

Secondhand Smoke and Asthma

Fact Sheet

Secondhand smoke, or Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS), is made up of exhaled smoke from smokers and smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe. Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 substances, including more than 40 that cause cancer.

How Does Secondhand Smoke Affect Asthma?

Many of the health effects of secondhand smoke, including asthma, are most clearly seen in children. That's because children are most vulnerable to its effects. Children's growing bodies make them more subject to the dangerous effects of secondhand smoke and, due to their small size, they breathe faster than adults and take in more secondhand smoke. Children exposed to a lot of secondhand smoke, such as those with smoking mothers, have the greatest risk of being exposed to harmful health effects.

Secondhand smoke:

- Can trigger asthma attacks or make them worse.
- Can be a risk factor for new cases of asthma in preschool-aged children who have not already shown symptoms of asthma.
- Is believed to irritate the inflamed bronchial tubes of people with asthma.
- Is tied to other health problems, such as lung cancer, ear infections, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), bronchitis and pneumonia.

Source: Adapted from the U.S. EPA Web site: Asthma and Indoor Environments, 2005

What Can You Do?

- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- Visit smoke-free restaurants and hotels/motels.
- Don't smoke in the car when children (or other nonsmokers) are present.
- Friends and family who smoke and are in your home should go outside if they want to smoke. Explain that you are not asking them to quit, but that you do not want your children exposed to the smoke.
- In public places where smoking is not allowed, politely ask people who are smoking to put out their cigarettes.
- **For help quitting call 1.888.567.TRUTH or visit utahquitnet.com**

Source: Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, Utah Department of Health, 2001

